D Ī N Ā R A .

Dīnāra spelt as Dinnāra, Dināraka,Dinnārika and mentioned in a number of literary works and Gupta epigraphs, is derived from the Roman Denarins (Deni-ten each; Arins - taken directly) meaning a coin of ten. The Roman Denarins was a silver coin of ten Asses. They had infilterated into India in a large number through trade during the first four-five centuries of the Christian era.

Denarins was a silver coin in Rome; but in India gold coin was named as Dīnāra. Why and how the term known for silver was imposed upon gold is difficult to say. The name was probably used in the beginning for the Kushāṇa gold coins, as Bhandarkar (D.R.) has suggested[1]; but the term is unknown in literature and epigraphs prior to the Gupta period. Earliest reference to it, is found in the inscriptions of the Gupta Emperors Kumaragupta I[2], Budha Gupta[3] and Vishṇugupta[4]. Some of them indicate that a Dīnāra was equal to 15 Rūpakas.

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1. Carmicheal Lectures, 1921, p.181.

2. Garhwa Inspcription III; Dhanaidah Copper plates; Kalai Kuri Copper plate; Damodarpur Copper plate I and II.

3. Paharpur Copper plate, Damodarpur Copper plates III and IV.

4. Damodarpur Copper plate V.

Brihaspati and Kātyāyana Smritis which are dated to the late Gupta period have mentioned Dīnāras as synonymous to Suvarṇa. The Kathā-Sarita-Sāgara (Circa 11th Century A.D.) has called Dīnāra as Suvarṇa-Rūpaka (gold coin).[5] The Rāja-Taraṅgiṇī (middle of twelfth Century A.D.) has referred to Dīnāra profusely in payment of salaries.[6]

Gold coins of the Gupta period are available in large number; but it is not yet easy to suggest the exact weight of Dīnāra as the coins are not uniform in their weight. It is generally recognised that they were based on two different weight standards. According to Allan, the earlier coins were based upon the traditional Kushana standard which was the Roman Aureus and the later coins were issued on the standard weight of 80 Rattīs (144 grains) mentioned in the indegeneous sources for Suvarṇa.[7] But the two weights theory for the Gupta coins is fallacious.

The early Gupta coins do not follow the Kushanas for their weight. This is clear from the fact that the coins of the early rulers - Chandragupta I,

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5. Kathā-Sarita-Sāgara, 78. 11 and 13.

6. Rājataraṅgiṇī, VI.38; VII.145-59; VII.163; VII.418; VIII.1918 etc.

7. B.M.C. G.D., Intro. p cxxxiv.

Kacha Gupta and Samudra Gupta weigh only 118-120 grains, while all the Kushana coins weigh in the proximely of 122-123 grains. Only the coins of Chandra Gupta II weigh 121 grains; but some of his coins also weigh 124 and 128 grains. Kumara Gupta I's coins weigh 124 to 130 grains and Skanda Gupta's coins go upto 136 grains. Thus there is no precise weight for the early Gupta coins to suggest that they followed the Kushāṇa weight. Again, the coins of Skanda Gupta weighs 142-144 grains and the weight of the coins of his successors gradually increase and go upto 151 grains in the time of Vishṇu Gupta. As such they also have no precise correspondence with the Suvarṇa Standard. It is also noticeable that with the rise of the weight, the gold contents in the Gupta coins regularly decreased. It was 80% in the time of Chandra Gupta II and his predecessors, but it remained only 43% in the time of Vishṇu Gupta.[8] There was thus an inter-relation in the debasement of gold and the rise of the weight.

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8. Gupta, P.L., J.N.S.I., XIV, p.118-121; Gupta, P.L., The Imperial Guptas, p.68-71.

Then no where in the Imperial Gupta inscriptions[9] the Suvarna has been used for the coins. They uniformly refer to Dīnāra even in those inscriptions, which were issued in the period when the heavy weight coins were current.

It is, therefore, clear that the Gupta coins did not follow any definite weight standard; they adopted their own weight for the coins, according to the neccessity of their time. As such no precise weight standard can be suggested for Dīnāra of the Gupta period.

The late Gupta or post-Gupta Smritis - Nārada[10] and Kātyāyana[11] inform that Dīnāra was equal to 12 Dhānakas. The same is said in the Bhaksāli Manuscripts, which are placed in the ninth-tenth Century A.D. There the Dīnāra is equalled with 12 Dhānas (or Dhānakas), as well as with 2 Drakshuṇas.[12] The Gaṇitesāra of Mahāvirāchārya, almost contemporary

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9. Bhankarkar is wrong when he says that Suvarna is referred to in a Gupta record (Charmichaél lectures, p.183.

10. कार्षापणोण्डिका ज्ञेया ताश्चतस्त्रस्तु धानका: ।
ता द्वादश सुवर्णस्तु दीनाराख्य: स एव तु ।। Nārada-Smriti.60.

11. कार्षापणोण्डिका ज्ञेयास्ता श्चतरस्तु धानक: ।
ते द्वादश सुवर्णस्तु (र्णस्तु) दीवारश्चित्रक: स्मृत: ।।

Kātyāyana-Smriti, 494.

12. Folios 33,49recto;Keye. The Bhakshāli Manuscript, p.54,64-5; cf. J.N.S.I., XVI, p.232.

to the above Manuscript says that one Dīnāra was equal to 2 Drakshuṇa or 12 Bhāgas[13] (perhaps the same as Dhānaka). According to Bhaksāli Manuscripts, one Dhānaka was equal to 60 Rattīs.[14] This indicates that the Dīnāra during this period was about 100 grains in weight, much less than the weight of the Gupta coins. As regards the value, the said Manuscripts inform that the daily wages of a coolie was $1\frac{1}{3}$ to 3 Dīnāras or one Dramma and according to Gaṇitasāra its value was ½ Satera.

Pandit (R.S.) has suggested in a note to his translation of the Rājataraṅgiṇī[15] that Dīnāras were coined in gold and silver as well as in copper. A hundred shell or cowries were equal to one copper Dīnāra. He thinks that if Kalhaṇa refers to salaries of high offices and others in terms of thousands of Dīnāras, he meant the copper Dīnāras. But no where Dīnāras in silver and copper are known in Indian Numismatics. The mention of salaries in thousands has mislead Pandit. He has perhaps not realised that Kashmira gold coins were so heavily adultrated with

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13. Gaṇitasāra, Chap.I, verses 42-43.

14. Folio 49 rects; Keye, The Bhakshāli Manuscript, p.142; cf. J.N.S.I.,XVI, p.233.

15. Rājataraṅgiṇī, III, 103, f.n.

base metal that they could hardly have any high value. The mention of Dīnāras in the Rājataraṅgiṇī, meant only these base gold coins; and likewise the term was used for all other imitations of the Gupta and Kushana coins.

Lastly, it would be interesting to mention that in the Jain Canonical Kalpa-Sūtra, it is said that Triśalā, the mother of Mahāvīra, saw Śrī, the Goddess of beauty in her dream, wearing a string of Dīnāras on her breast.[16] This suggests that the Dīnāra coins were used in those days for making necklace also, much likely in the same way as we find the use of rupee coins for making necklace (Hamela).

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16. Kalpa-Sūtra, p.44.